

# The use of perception of reality: a close reading of ender's game



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“ Real. Not a game. Ender’s mind was too tired to cope with it all. They weren’t just points of light in the air, they were real ships that he had fought with and real ships he had destroyed. And a real world that he had blasted into oblivion...” (Page 229)

This passage is quoted from the novel *Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card — a narrative depicting a young boy’s isolated struggle whilst training to save the world from an approaching war with an insect-like alien species known as the buggers. Through the displayed example of Ender’s perception of reality being altered, Card uses symbolism to demonstrate the thematic concept of games vs. reality. When faced with factors such as Bonzo, and restrictions, Ender must be willing to do what benefits the greater good — carrying these skills over when faced to the Third invasion. Through the Fantasy Game, Ender is able to live through scenarios that directly reflect Ender’s life, and mind through symbolism. This can be exemplified by Ender seeing his own siblings in the game. When Ender dreams of the “ End of the World,” he is able to replay the final chapter of his Command School life in order to cope with how he feels he is similar to Peter, due to his unintentional destructive nature and demise of the bugger world. This, as a whole, exemplifies a deeper emotional connection to the factors pressing on him outside of the game after he learns the game was merely the war in disguise. Through all three concepts, Ender’s game becomes his reality as time progresses.

When living in a society where the responsibility to save the world falls upon those of children, it can be assumed that the level of maturity would be sped up to adapt with the task at hand. However, there is irony in the fact that

Bonzo Madrid, commander of the Salamander army, feels a strike in his pride

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when someone inferior to him appears to be better than him. Due to this, Bonzo tries his best to restrict Ender from having the opportunity to better himself; going as far as to restrict his free time. “ You’ll do what I tell you, you little bastard. That’s right, sir. I’ll follow all the orders that you’re authorized to give. But free play is free. No assignments can be given. None. By anyone. While you’re in Salamander Army, you’ll obey me. If you try to control my free play, I can get you iced.” (Page 69) In this instance, Bonzo believes he can fully overthrow Ender, as he is perceived as someone who can be easily pushed over due to his age. However, when threatened to be removed from command at the cost of Ender’s free time, Bonzo switches his strategy to simply waiting to trade Ender out, and in the meantime, restricting all his authorized orders. When placed against the Leopard army, Ender exemplifies his dilemma of bettering himself versus following the rules; choosing to better himself by slowing slipping through the gate, into the game. “ Everyone in Leopard Army assumed that it had been a strategy of Bonzo’s, to leave a man till the last minute. It didn’t occur to them that little Ender had fired against orders. But Salamander Army knew. Bonzo knew, and Ender could see from the way the commander looked at him that Bonzo hated him for rescuing him from total defeat. I don’t care, Ender told himself. It will just make me easier to trade away, and in the meantime you won’t drop so far in the standings.” (Page 74) Through this conflict, along with many others, Ender is able to learn that the games can’t always be solved by the stereotypical strategies. These experiences allow for Ender to enhance his willingness to new ideas, due to the fact that he believes there will be minimal consequences. Even when taken to command school, Ender is able to apply the skills learned from Battle School and especially Bonzo

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because the perception of the game allows Ender to take risks that he wouldn't have if he were to know it was real.

In the eyes of Ender Wiggin, going to Battle School was seen as a blessing to move away from his older brother Peter's sadistic nature. However, while this came as an advantage, it also didn't fully work out in his favor due to the fact that Ender had leave behind the only person who ever loved him:

Valentine. Before Ender's departure to Battle School, both his siblings had represented two varying things in his mind: compassion, and ruthlessness.

Valentine was perceived as his protector, while Peter was seen as his abuser.

" I could kill you like this," Peter whispered. " Just press and press until you're dead. And I could say that I didn't know it would hurt you, that we were just playing, and they'd believe me, and everything would be fine. And you'd be dead. Everything would be fine." Ender could not speak; the breath was being forced from his lungs. Peter might mean it. Probably didn't mean it, but then he might. " I'll tell," Valentine said... " Oh, yes," said Valentine. " They'll believe that. ' I didn't know it would kill Andrew. And when he was dead, I didn't know it would kill Valentine too.'" The pressure let up a little."

(Page 10) However, while Ender left both his siblings on Earth behind, they both lived in his mind, as well as in the Fantasy Game. Although, Ender holds compassion in his heart, and uses violence for reasons of self defense, he always believes that when he inflicts violence on others, he has lived up to the nature of Peter. After a battle strikes out between the Launchies, and older boys, Ender ends up hurting four people, resulting in an " ACCIDENTAL COLLISION IN NULL G." (Page 91) Shortly after, Ender logs onto the Fantasy Game, and sees himself as Peter in the mirror, thus reflecting the events that

happened prior. " He stepped on the head of the snake and crushed it under his foot. It writhed and twisted under him, and in response he twisted and ground it deeper into the stone floor. Finally it was still. Ender picked it up and shook it, until it unwove itself and the pattern in the rug was gone. Then, still dragging the snake behind him, he began to look for a way out. Instead, he found a mirror. And in the mirror he saw a face that he easily recognized. It was Peter, with blood dripping down his chin and a snake's tail protruding from a corner of his mouth. Ender shouted and thrust his desk from him."

(Page 91) However, Peter does not only appear in the Fantasy Game, Valentine does as well. " This time he caught it in his hands, knelt before it, and gently, so gently, brought the snake's gaping mouth to his lips. And kissed. And the snake in his hands thickened and bent into another shape. A human shape. It was Valentine, and she kissed him again...She arose from the floor of the tower room and walked to the mirror. Ender made his figure also rise and go with her. They stood before the mirror, where instead of Peter's cruel reflection there stood a dragon and a unicorn...Tears filled his eyes, tears of relief that at last he had broken free of the End of the World. And because of the tears, he didn't notice that every member of the multitude wore Peter's face. He only knew that wherever he went in this world, Valentine was with him." (Page 118) After many trials of facing the snake to only die as Peter, Ender ends up kissing the snake, thus transforming into Valentine. While Ender constantly views himself as Peter in the game, he realizes that with the use of compassion in the game, and in reality, there will always be a part of him that is Valentine. Through seeing a unicorn in the mirror, the symbolism of positive change in the world is shown through, being that Ender realizes there is an ounce of Valentine in him, and <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-perception-of-reality-a-close-reading-of-enders-game/>

that he is not purely Peter. The ability of seeing he is capable of having both parts Peter and Valentine in himself allows for Ender to see that within himself, there is no dominant portion between the two, thus reflecting his ability to reflect his life, and mind.

To cope with unintentionally destroying an entire race without any knowledge of doing so, Ender begins to experience dreams about the buggers and the "End of the World." In his thoughts, Ender leaps from a cliff and is brought to the bugger world, to repeatedly witness the destruction of the bugger world he had caused. "Nobody ever asked me if I wanted to kill anybody. But the forest laughed at him. And when he leapt from the cliff at the End of the World, sometimes it was not clouds that caught him, but a fighter that carried him to a vantage point near the surface of the buggers' world, so he could watch, over and over, the eruption of death when Dr. Device set off a reaction on the planet's face; then closer and closer, until he could watch individual buggers explode, turn to light, then collapse into a pile of dirt before his eyes." (Page 231) The "End of the World," essentially allows Ender to replay his last recollection of the Third Invasion, as he is tricked into ending the war. Not only does Ender feel remorse for his actions against the buggers, but upset at Rackham and Graff for using him. In addition to this, Ender being traumatized from a young age, as well as through the Fantasy Game is perceived to believe that he is the mere reflection of Peter. For Ender to be tricked into destroying an entire species without any knowledge, allows for Ender to draw a similarity to his brother, whom he never would want to be remotely compared to.

Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* depicts the distinction between games and reality; mainly exemplified through the willingness to disobey the rules to benefit the overall goal of saving the world, *Fantasy Game*, and the "End of the World,". With the of willingness to benefit the overall goal of saving the world, Ender is depicted as being able to enhance his inclination to new ideas, due to the fact that he believes there will be no consequences. His experience with *Bonzo* further enhances this skill by examining his own moral compass as to what the most beneficial action he could do would be, such as disobeying orders to better himself, as well as the entire team. This carries over to his time in *Command School* because not only does it further his strategy to win the stimulation, but the overall *Third Invasion*.

With the *Fantasy Game*, Ender is able to live in the game with symbols that directly reflect Ender's life, and mind. Through the game, *Anderson* and *Graff* are able to monitor this, and are able to detect Ender's feelings, as well as what he is thinking whilst training at *Battle School*. Examples of this would be seeing *Peter* and *Valentine* implemented into the game, both symbolizing different images in Ender's perception. In regard to the "End of the World," Ender is able to replay the final chapter of his *Command School* life in order to cope with how he feels he is similar to *Peter*, due to his unintentional destructive nature and demise of the *bugger world*. While Card tackles many different themes and concepts throughout the novel, his most powerful literary elements are symbolism, and the theme of perception of reality which he exhibits through a variety of characters, and concepts.